

FROM THE RECORD OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE

TESTIMONY OF MONSIGNOR BELLA VARGA
OCTOBER 26, 1956, AT 4:00 P.M.
IN THE OFFICE OF THE
HUNGARIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL
NEW YORK CITY

Present: Robert Morris, Chief Counsel, United States Senate Internal Security Subcommittee; Monsignor Bela Varga; Nelson Frank, Subcommittee Staff Consultant.

Mr. Morris: May the record show that Msgr. Bela Varga, the witness here today, previously appeared before the Subcommittee and at that time was sworn.

Mr. Morris: Msgr. Bela Varga, you understand that the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee has been conducting an inquiry during the past year into the activities of Hungarian Communists here in the United States. The activities included are those of the Hungarian Communist representatives to the United Nations, the members of the staff of the Hungarian Legations and members of the various Hungarian Communist Consulates and others. In view of the extraordinary developments that are now taking place in Hungary, the Subcommittee would like to have from you testimony bearing on the nature and the scope of what is now going on in Hungary. The Subcommittee would like to know this in connection with its general understanding of what to expect from the Hungarian Communists here in this country.

Msgr. Varga; you were an official of the Hungarian postwar Government, were you not?

Msgr. Varga: I was not a member of the Government. I was the President of the Parliament, the so-called National Assembly, and in this capacity, I was the Vice President of the Republic.

Mr. Morris: And you served in that capacity for how long?

Msgr. Varga: I served from February 1946 until June 1, 1947, when I escaped.

Mr. Morris: Why did you escape?

Msgr. Varga: Because it was evident, after the resignation of Prime Minister Nagy that the Russians would imprison me. Bela Kovacs, a Minister, was imprisoned in February by the Russian Army. He was brainwashed and forced to give a false confession. In it he said that Premier Nagy and I were guilty of conspiring against "the Democracy" and against the Russians.

Mr. Morris: Monsignor, what is the meaning of what is now taking place in Hungary?

Msgr. Varga: The meaning of this Hungarian uprising is that the Hungarian people are entirely dissatisfied with Russian occupation and they didn't want to continue this dark period when the Russian Army was ruling the country. They try to do even the impossible against the Red Army and against the Communist rule to be free - to have the same rights which are given now to even the smallest tribes in Africa - free elections and self-determination of the nation.

Mr. Morris: Monsignor, was this uprising, to your knowledge, spontaneous?

Msgr. Varga: This uprising, you know, was partly organized - in my opinion - but they didn't want to do what is now happening. First, the youth of the country was selected and educated by the Communist forces, especially by Rakosi. In spite of this, they demanded democracy, autonomy for the universities, and when they began demonstrating and after the secret police attacked them, the whole country joined with the students. Now we know how it began. The whole country and even the Hungarian soldiers joined up with them and they are now fighting against the Communists.

Mr. Morris: Do you mean that the uprising had its origin among the students who had been selected by the Communists?

Msgr. Varga: Under the Communist rule in Hungary, just the sons of the poor peasants and the factory workers were permitted to study in the universities. The sons of the white-collar people and of the so-named class enemies and the richer peasants, the Kulaks, were not permitted to go to the universities. This youth which was educated under Communist coeducation -- girls and boys together in dormitories and colleges -- and the Communists were very proud that they had a new youth, a new Hungarian people, this kind of the new democracy, equal rights and human rights for the whole Hungarian people.

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Mr. Morris: Now, Monsignor, is this in any way a Titoist uprising?

Msgr. Varga: There doesn't exist a Titoist. Titoism is some Yugoslavian creation because there we have just one Tito. The Hungarians are fighting now against every kind of Communists. For instance, it is now said that the new Hungarian Communist Premier, Imre Nagy, is a Hungarian Titoist. Everybody is now against Imre Nagy and he is the person responsible for asking for Russian Army intervention and causing the terrible sacrifice of people -- thousands and thousands have died. The capital is partly in ruins. Nobody can mention even the word "Titoism", the people are moving against every kind of Communism.

Mr. Morris: Monsignor, you were in Europe recently, were you not?

Msgr. Varga: I was in Europe for two months this summer.

Mr. Morris: At that time were you in touch with any people who themselves had been in Hungary or who had connections with Hungary?

Msgr. Varga: I had connections with all kinds of people who came from Hungary, those connected with Hungary and even those who came from and went back to Hungary.

Mr. Morris: And their reports to you, how did these people describe conditions in Hungary?

Mr. Morris: In their reports to you how did these people describe conditions in Hungary?

Msgr. Varga: Last summer, in August, it was clear that the youth which was in greatest danger a year ago or two years ago, this youth of our universities would do something in the near future. Everybody knew that the will and the spirit of these people with the help of the whole country--not just 80 per cent but 99 per cent of the population would nourish the spirit of the young university students. It was clear that they would begin to do something; it would be the beginning of Hungarian freedom and of Hungarian democracy.

Mr. Morris: Is there, in your opinion, any resemblance between what is going on inside of Hungary with what is going on inside of Poland?

Msgr. Varga: Naturally, the Poles and the Hungarians are old friends. The Poles and Hungarians never warred against each other among European nations. All of the others battled at some time. And this old thousand-year-old friendship has gone on between Poles and Hungarians. During the late war, for instance, when Hitler ran over Poland and the Russians under Stalin divided Poland, Polish refugees came to Hungary and found a home there. More than two-hundred thousand Poles escaped to Hungary and this is a big number for such a small nation as Hungary but we accepted all of them. Everybody got subsistence and everybody got work and they influenced each other always. Now, in this fight, I am sure that the Poles influenced the Hungarians and the Hungarians inspired the Poles. I think you know in Poland that nobody can stop the development now. I am not a prophet but that is what I believe.

Mr. Morris: Now, was there a counterpart in Hungary to the imposition of Gomulka onto the Polish people?

Msgr. Varga: In Hungary the whole development started with Rakosi's ouster as party boss. Rakosi refused to resign and was therefore compelled by the anti-Stalinists to do it because he represented the old Stalinist line in Hungary which had killed many generals, politicians, intellectuals and thousands of other patriots. And after that the Hungarian Communists (naturally it was the Communist line) they wanted to have anti-Communist leaders. Now after Rakosi, Khrushchev invited Mr. Gero who is even worse than Rakosi to Yalta with Tito. And they made an agreement because the Yugoslav leader was very much against the old Hungarian Stalinist and he accepted Gero and Gero visited him and came back supported by Tito. Tito supported the worst Stalinist, Gero, because it was in the interest of the Communists. Now Gero came back and no Hungarians were satisfied. The youth began to demonstrate against Gero. Came the Hungarian Gomulka, Imre Nagy, who was compelled to resign and was ousted by the Hungarian Communist Party some years before, but the development of the uprising came so fast that even this man who is not as cruel as the old Stalinists is now the darkest figure in the history of Hungary. Because he was the man who asked the Russian army for intervention, he has lost his reputation forever in Hungary.

Mr. Morris: You say that the acts of Mr. Nagy constitute the darkest acts in Hungarian history. What do you mean by that Monsignor?

Msgr. Varga: He, Imre Nagy, who had some sympathy from the nation, he is a man who now is the actual factor in this greatest tragedy of the Hungarian nation. He was the premier who asked the Russian army for intervention. It means to kill his own nation.

Mr. Morris: Monsignor, this would seem to be then from what you say, an act of intervention of a foreign power within the boundaries of Hungary brought about by a man who was formerly head of the Hungarian Government. Is that right?

Msgr. Varga: Imre Nagy as premier of Hungary asked the army of a foreign country to kill his nation's workers' sons because the purpose of the intervention of the Russian Army was to stem the demonstration of the nation. In the beginning of this time they didn't fight you know. The fight began when the Russian soldiers and the Russian tanks attacked them and the people lost everything. Now the whole nation doesn't want to do anything but fight against the Communists.

Mr. Morris: Monsignor, were the Soviet troops already in Hungary when Nagy asked for their assistance?

Msgr. Varga: The Soviet troops were in Hungary but they didn't have any right to interfere in Hungarian life.

Mr. Morris: Do you believe that this action of the Soviet troops constitutes an aggression under the meaning of that term within the United Nations' Charter?

I am perfectly convinced that it is an aggression of a foreign country, a foreign army against the nation, against the people of Hungary.
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2004/06/23 : CIA-RDP58-00597A000200140034-0

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Mr. Morris: What do you think should be done about it at this time, Monsignor?

Msgr. Varga: The Security Council of the United Nations has to take over the whole case, examine it, and stop the action and punish the aggressors as was said yesterday by the President of the United States. President Eisenhower said yesterday here in New York that the United States deplores the intervention of Soviet military force which under the Treaty of Peace should have been withdrawn, the presence of which as is now demonstrated is not to protect the Hungarians against armed aggression from without, but rather to continue an occupation of Hungary by forces of an alien government for its own purposes. It means that Russia is the biggest colonial state. Russia which is always attacking and making terrible propaganda everywhere on earth against the United States, against Great Britain, and against other countries. It is the darkest colonialism in the history of mankind; not just in Siberia but now even in Hungary.

Mr. Morris: Now, is there anything else Monsignor that you could tell us, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, for this record which might be helpful for the Senators in this particular crisis?

Msgr. Varga: In this tragic period of my poor country, the Hungarian women with their children came before the Legation of the United States in Budapest. They cried and they asked the intervention of America--stop the killing of our husbands and our children they pleaded.

The Russians then came and fired on this pitiful crowd. It was so inhuman and so against every form and kind of democracy, every kind of human right that it should never happen in this world. I am convinced that if now the United Nations will do nothing and will not punish the aggressors that the United Nations will lose its moral basis for its existence and no one and no nation would ever again believe in its future.

Mr. Morris: Thank you very much, Monsignor.

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